



## **“Co-operNation” – A Captivating Children’s Book Series and Suite of Educational Resource Launches, Promoting Co-operative Values and Community Building**

**GUELPH, DECEMBER 4, 2023** – Co-operNation, a delightful new children's book series and educational suite of resources introduces young minds to the importance of co-operation, kindness, and community building. Created by a pair of multi-award-winning co-operative educators, Kerr Smith and Michelle Christmann, this heartwarming collection of stories introduces the "Co-oppaws" – loveable creatures who embark on adventures in the city of Co-operNation, demonstrating the power of teamwork and inclusivity, while celebrating individual uniqueness.

Smith says of the project, “As friends and collaborators working in the co-operative sector for over a decade, we often talked about how we wished we’d learned about co-operatives and the importance of community building, collaboration, and civic engagement at a much earlier age. We’ve worked on successful projects for teens, but couldn’t find anything to engage a younger audience, so we decided to create our own world built on the co-operative values and principles.”

Designed for young audiences aged four to ten years old, Co-operNation combines meaningful and easy- to-follow storylines with Dr. Seuss-like rhyming and vibrant illustrations to serve as a valuable tool for parents, teachers, and co-operatives alike, wanting to instill these essential values in children.

### **Engaging Co-operatives and Credit Unions: A Unique Opportunity**

Co-operNation also presents an exciting opportunity for co-operatives and credit unions to align their values with a meaningful educational initiative. Northern Credit Union, the largest credit union in Northern Ontario, has embraced the Co-operNation project as the first books to launch in their new "Read Local" program. The initiative, championed by the Advisory Committee, aligns with Northern Credit Union's mission to build resilient and equitable communities by promoting local economies, literacy proficiency, and improved educational resources.

“We couldn’t think of a better way to launch “Read Local” than with the Co-operNation books by Kerr and Michelle”, explains Jessie Wright, Northern Credit Union’s Communications and Community Events Specialist. “Our partnership mirrors the theme of the books; Emphasizing that co-operation and teamwork are essential to building more sustainable communities. We hope that by introducing children to these values at a young age, it will motivate them to work together and become changemakers of their generation. Kerr and Michelle really hit it out of the park with these books.”

## Beyond the Books: A Whimsical World of Curriculum, Merchandise and More!

In addition to the storybooks and educational resources, Co-operNation has its own online shop with a growing catalogue of merchandise. With everything from teeshirts to posters, these products promote the values and principles of co-operatives, and celebrate the ideals of kindness and community building. What's more, interested co-operatives or credit unions can incorporate their branding into any of the products - to create a fun and engaging way to communicate their values with staff, members, and their communities.

As Christmann notes, "Stay tuned, as we have a long list of storybooks and accompanying curriculum to create and we're adding new resources all the time." There are already several free resources and engaging activities for children available at their website. Co-operNation is an introduction to a whole new world, built to inspire our next generation to grow a future grounded in co-operation, kindness, and community values.

To access these, and for more information about Co-operNation, go to [www.visitcooperation.com](http://www.visitcooperation.com), follow [@visitcooperation](https://www.instagram.com/visitcooperation) on Instagram, or email [visitcooperation@gmail.com](mailto:visitcooperation@gmail.com).

